STORIES OF ALL SORTS FOR ALL PEOPLE.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 342. FOR WEEK ENDING JULY 20, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A WONDERFUL MEDICINE.

BEECHAM'S PILLS

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SHORT STORIES.

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No. 342.] FOR THE WEEK ENDING JULY 20, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A RUSSIAN TRAGEDY

I WAS eighteen years old, and had been two years an ensign in the regiment of *Paulovsky*. The regiment was quartered in the great building that still exists on the other side of the Champ de Mars, fronting the summer garden. The Emperor Paul I. was then reigning, and had been for three years. He resided in the Red Palace, which had just at that time been completed.

One night, after I don't remember what escapade, the leave of absence which I had asked for, in order to join a few comrades, was refused, and I remained in the barracks almost alone. I was aroused from my sleep by a voice that whispered in my ear: "Dimitri-Alexandrovitch, wake up and follow me!" I opened my eyes. A man was before me, who repeated to me the invitation which he gave me while I was half-asleep.

"Follow you!" said I; "where?"

"I cannot tell you. But take notice that the order comes from the Emperor!"

I trembled. From the Emperor! What in the world could he want with me, a poor ensign—of a good family, no doubt, but far too distant from the throne to allow the name to reach the Imperial ear? I recalled the sombre Russian proverb that came into existence in the days of Ivan the Terrible: "Close to the Tsar, close to death!"

But there was no help for it. I jumped out of bed and dressed myself. Then I looked with some attention at the man who had come to arouse me. All wrapped up as he was in his overcoat, I thought I recognised in him an old Turkish slave, at first the barber, and finally the favourite, of the Emperor. This examination, moreover, was brief. It might, perhaps, have been dangerous to prolong it.

"Follow you!" said I; "where?"

"I am ready," said I, at the end of five minutes; and I buckled on my sword carelessly. My nervousness increased when I found that my guide, instead of taking the usual door of the barracks, descended through a little winding staircase into the lower portion of the immense building. He lighted the way with a sort of dark lantern. After several turns and detours, I found myself fronting a little door, the existence of which I had not known before. During all the route we met nobody. One could imagine that the building was deserted. Certainly I fancied that I saw one or two shadows pass, but they disappeared, or rather vanished in the obscurity.

The door in front of which we stood was closed. My guide knocked in a certain fashion, and it opened, evidently put in motion by a man who was waiting on the other side. As a matter of fact, when we passed through I saw distinctly, notwithstanding the darkness, a man, who closed the door again and followed us.

The passage which we entered was subterranean, about eight feet wide, and the moisture oozed through the brick walls.

At the end of about five hundred paces this passage was closed by an iron gate. My guide took a key from his pocket, opened the gate, and closed it behind us. We continued our route. Just then I commenced to recall the tradition according to which a subterranean gallery existed between the Red Palace and the barracks of the Grenadiers of *Paulovsky*. I knew that we were in this gallery, and that inasmuch as we had left the barracks, we were on our way to the palace.

We arrived in front of another door, similar to the one through which we had passed in the first instance. My guide knocked at this door in the same manner that he had knocked at the other one, and it opened like the other, set in motion by a man on the inside. Here we found ourselves at the foot of a staircase, which we mounted. It led to the lower apartment of a building; but, from the atmosphere, it was easy to discover that we were entering a well-warmed establishment. This building soon revealed the proportions of a palace.

Then all my doubts ceased. They were bringing me into the presence of the Emperor, the Emperor who sent for me, an obscure ensign, almost hidden in the lower ranks of the Guard. I remember the story of the young ensign whom he had noticed in the street and placed behind him in his carriage, appointing him successively, in less than a quarter of an hour, lieutenant, captain, major, colonel, and general; but I had no hope that he sent for me with the same intention.

However, we arrived at last before another door, in front of which a sentinel was pacing up and down. My guide put his hand upon my shoulder, and said to me, "Keep up your courage; you are going into the presence of the Emperor." Then he whispered something in the ear of the sentinel, and the latter moved to one side. My guide opened the door, not by

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putting the key in the lock, so far as I could see, but by some secret means.

A man of small stature stood before me. He was dressed in a Prussian uniform, with boots that reached above his knees, and an overcoat that touched his spurs, and wore a gigantic plumed hat. I recognised him as the Emperor. It was not difficult; he reviewed us every day, and I remembered that at the review of the day before he fixed his eyes upon me, called my captain from the ranks, asked him some questions in almost a whisper, while looking at me, and then spoke to an officer of his staff in a tone in which one gives an absolute order. All that only increased my nervousness.

I recognised him as the Emperor.

"Sire," said my guide bowing, "this is the young ensign whom you desire to speak to."

The Emperor approached, and, as he was of small stature, he raised himself on the point of his toes to look at me. No doubt he recognised me as the man he wanted, for he made a sign of approval with his head, and then whirled round, and said, "Go!" My guide bowed, went out, and left me alone with the Emperor. I assure you I would almost have preferred to be left alone in an iron cage with a lion.

His Majesty at first appeared to pay no attention to me. He walked up and down, taking long steps, stopping now and then before a window with a single pane of glass, and opening it to breathe the fresh air. Then he returned to his table, upon which his snuff-box was placed, and took a pinch of snuff.

This was the window of his bed-chamber, the room in which he was afterwards killed, and which, they say, has remained closed ever since. I had time to examine it thoroughly. Near one of the windows there was a desk, and on the desk a sheet of letter-paper. At last the Emperor appeared to notice me. As he advanced towards me his face had a perfectly fiendish expression, although, in reality, that was only the result of his nervousness. He paused in front of me:

"Dust," said he, "you know that you are only dust, and that I am everything."

I don't know how I had strength enough to reply: "You are the elected one of the Lord, the arbiter of the destiny of men."

He grunted, and, turning his back upon me, began once more to pace the room, and, after opening the window as before, and taking another pinch of snuff, he returned to me for the second time.

"And you know, too," said he, "that when I command I must be obeyed implicitly, without observation and without comment."

"Just as one would obey God; yes, Sire, I know that."

He gazed at me. In his eyes there was such a strange expression that I could not stand his glance. He seemed pleased with the influence that he exercised over me. Then he went over to his desk, took up the letter, read it carefully, folded it, put it in an envelope, and sealed this envelope, not with the Imperial seal, but with a ring which he wore on his hand. Then he returned to me.

"Remember," said he, "that I have chosen you out of a thousand to execute my orders, because I have thought that by you they would be well executed."

"I will always have in my mind the obedience that I owe to my Emperor," said I.

"Very well. Remember that you are only dust, and that I am everything!"

"I await the orders of your Majesty."

"Take this letter," said he, in a nervous and husky tone, "take it to the Governor of the Fortress, accompany him wherever he wishes to bring you. Be present at everything that he will do, and come back and say to me, '*I saw!*'"

I took the envelope and bowed.

"*I saw!*" he repeated in a cavernous voice. "You understand?—'*I saw!*'"

"Yes, Sire."

"Go!"

The Emperor closed the door behind me, muttering the word "dust."

I remained stupefied at the threshold.

"Come," said my guide; and we again stepped out, but by a different road, which led to the exterior of the fortress. A sleigh was waiting in the courtyard, and we both got into it. The great door of the fortress, leading to the bridge of the Fontanka, opened and the sleigh started out, the horses trotting rapidly. We crossed the entire square until we found ourselves on the banks of the Neva. Our horses started out upon the ice, and, guided by the steeples of Peter and Paul, we crossed the river. The night was obscure, and the wind howled in a terrible fashion. I could hardly perceive, on coming again upon the other shore, that I was on solid ground.

We were now at the gate of the fortress. The soldier on guard took the countersign from my guide and allowed us to pass. We entered into the fortress, and the sleigh was stopped at the Governor's door. The countersign was given the second time, and we entered into the Governor's apartments, just as we had entered into the fortress.

The Governor was in bed, but they woke him up with the all-powerful command, "By order of the Emperor!" He approached, hiding his nervousness under a forced smile; for, with a man like Paul I., there was as little security for gaolers as for captives.

I gave him, without saying a word, the order of the Emperor. He brought it up to the candle, examined the seal, and noticed that it was the private seal of the Emperor, which was used for secret orders only. Then he bowed, and, after crossing himself rapidly, opened the letter. He read the order, looked at me, read it again, and then said:

"*You must see! You have to see?*"

"*I have to see,*" I replied.

"Do you know?"

"No."

Then he remained an instant thinking.

"How many persons can your sleigh hold?"

"Three."

"Is this gentleman coming with us?" said he, pointing to my guide.

I hesitated, not knowing what to say.

"No," said the latter. "I will wait here."

"What will you wait for?"

"The close of the act."

"Very well; get ready another sleigh, select four soldiers, let one take a crowbar, the other a hammer, and the two axes."

The man to whom the Governor addressed these words went out immediately. Then, turning to me, the Governor said, "Come, and *you shall see!*"

He walked in front of me, lighting the way. I followed him, and a turnkey walked behind us. We proceeded until we came in front of the prison. The Governor pointed to a door, and the turnkey immediately opened it, passed in first, lighted a lantern and carried it in front of us. We descended ten steps, and found ourselves in the first section of the dungeon, but we did not stop there; we had to go down ten steps further, and even there we did not stop but went down five more, and there we stopped.

The doors were all numbered, and the Governor stopped in front of No. 11. He made a sign to the turnkey, without speaking. One would imagine that in this tomb people had lost the faculty of speech.

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The door was opened and we descended six more steep and damp stone steps. Here we found ourselves in a cell about eight feet square. In the light of the lantern I saw a human figure move in this cell. We could hear a dull and strange rustling noise. I understood at once what it was, and whence it came. It was the water of the Neva rushing against the walls of the fortress. The cell was below the level of the river.

"Get up and dress yourself!" said the Governor.

I looked to see to whom the order was given, and, as the turnkey threw the light of his lantern upon a far corner of the cell, I noticed a thin and pale old man, with white hair and long white beard. No doubt he was put into that cell with the clothes he wore when he was arrested; but these garments had worn away, piece by piece, and he was now only half clad in a tattered cloak. Through the torn rags I could see his shivering and bony body, which, perhaps, at one time was dressed in splendid garments. Perhaps the insignia of the most noble orders were once fastened upon that fleshless breast. Now he was a living skeleton, without rank, without dignity, and even without a name. He was simply "Number 11."

He got up and wrapped himself up in his tattered old cloak without a murmur. His body was bent, broken down by long imprisonment, darkness and perhaps hunger; but his glance was still proud, almost threatening.

"All right," said the Governor. "Come."

The prisoner cast a final glance round his cell. For an instant his eye rested upon his stone seat, his water pitcher and his musty straw. He heaved a sigh! Great heavens! Could it be possible that he could regret anything there? He followed the Governor and passed in front of me. I can never forget the look which he gave me as he moved by, and the depth of reproach that was in that look.

"So young," he seemed to say, "and already at the orders of tyranny!" I cast down my eyes. That glance went to my heart like a poignard. How long had he been in that cell? Perhaps he didn't know himself. Probably he had ceased to measure the days and nights in the depth of that abyss.

He passed on and I walked after him. The gaoler followed us and carefully closed the cell door. No doubt it was needed for another. Outside, the two sleighs were ready. The prisoner was placed in the one that brought us. The Governor, myself, and the old man sat down—the Governor at his side, and I in front of him. The other sleigh was occupied by four soldiers.

Where we were going, or what we were about to do, I could not imagine. The affair itself was not my business. I was to see, and that was all. But, yes, there was something else; I had to say, "*I saw!*"

In the light of the lantern I saw a human figure move in this cell.

We started off. In my position I found my knees touching the knees of the old man. I could feel him trembling. The Governor was wrapped up in furs, and I was buttoned up in my military overcoat, and still we felt cold. The old man was almost naked, and the Governor offered him nothing to cover him. For an instant I had an idea of taking off my overcoat and giving it to the poor old man; but the Governor, guessing my intention, remarked, "It isn't worth while."

We had not gone far before the storm burst upon us with all its fury. The snowflakes became so thick that we were in danger of being lost in perfect walls of snow. At last we stopped, when, as I imagine, we must have been about one league from St. Petersburg. The Governor alighted, and approached the second sleigh. The four soldiers had already got down, each one holding in his hand the instrument he was ordered to bring.

"Make a hole in the ice!" said the Governor.

"Ah," muttered the old man, in a tone so strange that it might be taken for the unearthly laugh of a skeleton, "the Empress remembers me. I thought she had forgotten me!"

What Empress was he speaking of? Three Empresses had succeeded each other—Anne, Elizabeth, and Catherine. It was evident that he thought he was still living under one of them, and that he was ignorant of even the name of him who had decreed his death. What was the darkness of that terrible night compared to the years of darkness in his cell?

The four soldiers went to work. They cut the ice with their axes, and lifted up the block with their crowbars. Suddenly they jumped backwards. The work was done, the water appeared. "Get down!" said the Governor to the old man, turning to the sleigh where he expected to see him. The order was useless, for the old man had already come down. Kneeling upon the ice, he was praying. Then the governor gave an order in a low tone to the four soldiers, and returned and seated himself beside me. At the end of a minute the old man rose. "I am ready," said he.

The four soldiers seized him. I closed my eyes, but if I did not see, I heard. I heard the splash of a body thrown into the hole. In spite of myself I turned round. The old man was gone! I forgot that it was not for me to give orders, and I cried out to the driver, "*Pachol! Pachol!*"

"*Stoi!*" cried the Governor.

The sleigh, which had already started, was stopped. "All is not finished," said the Governor to me in French.

"What have we further to do?" said I.

"Wait," said he.

And we waited half an hour.

"The ice has again formed over the hole, your Excellency," said one of the soldiers.

"Are you sure?" asked the Governor.

The soldier struck the place with his crowbar. The water had already become solid.

"Now, let us go," said the Governor.

The horses started off in a gallop. One would have imagined that the demon of torments was pursuing them. In less than ten minutes we returned to the fortress. There I found my guide.

"To the Red Palace!" said he to the driver.

Five minutes afterwards the door of the Palace was opened for me. The Emperor was up and dressed, just as he was when I left him.

"Well?" said he.

"*I saw!*" was my answer.

"*You saw? saw? saw?*"

"Look at me, Sire, and you won't doubt it."

I was in front of a mirror and noticed my appearance. I was so pale and my features so altered that I scarcely recognised myself. The Emperor looked at me, and, without saying a word, took from the desk a paper.

"I give you," said he, "between Troitza and Pereslof a piece of land with five hundred peasants. Leave now, this very night, and never come back to St. Petersburg. If you speak, you know how I can punish. Go!"

I left, and never saw St. Petersburg again while Paul I. lived, and never before told a living being what I have now told to you.

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The Fatal Letters

THE men at the club remarked to one another that Remington was making a mistake in marrying a girl hardly out of her teens. To Remington, however, they wisely said nothing, and many of them went to his wedding, which was their reward for knowing when to speak and when to be silent.

Remington was forty if he was a day. His hair was scant on the crown, and very white on the temples; and in a certain unbecoming light the crow's-feet about his eyes showed deeply. His figure, though, was youthfully slender, his step elastic, and he clad himself with the up-to-date taste of a University undergraduate. He was dignified, suave, and polished. By many he was deemed cold and calculating; but the many had not pierced the armour of his reserve. His wealth was enormous, which was sufficient of itself to make his bride envied by her sisters.

Louise Baldwin was as fair as a lily. Her education had been such that she came to him knowing as much about the management of a great establishment as a babe in arms. Her simplicity had been her chief attraction.

The first week of their honeymoon was spent in Paris, but her demeanour during the whole time was cold and callous.

Then they met some friends, and to Mrs. Remington the meeting seemed to be a glad one. Remington was not so well pleased, save that the association made a change for the better in his wife's mood. In their presence she laughed now and then, as she had been wont to do before the wedding, and the occasions when he chanced upon her gazing out of her window at the Hotel Bristol, upon the Column Vendome, with tears streaming down her pale cheeks, became fewer and fewer.

Her husband's efforts to win the love that he craved, and that had so mysteriously eluded him, were not aggressive. He adopted a course of passivity, but not of indifference. Not for a moment did he relax his attentions. Not a wish of hers, either spoken or implied, did he disregard. For six months they travelled about the Continent, frequently being in the company of those friends they had met in Paris and often in the company of others. It was, in fact, seldom that they travelled alone.

At Zermatt, under the shadow of the Matterhorn, they stumbled upon Remington's nephew, a brawny youth, who a few years before had rowed in the Oxford eight. He had not been in England for the wedding, but he remembered the bride very well indeed. He recalled that they had been neighbours when he was in knickerbockers; and he recollected distinctly the time when she and he, under the care of their respective nurses, trundled hoops in the local park.

Remington chose Zermatt, of all places in the world, in which to be laid up for three days with a bilious attack; and his nephew, Yorke Ledyard, endeavoured meanwhile to make his old playmate find the time hang lightly on her hands.

One day they travelled on donkeys to the Gornergrat; on another they walked to a mountain gorge near by; and the third, which happened to be Sunday, they sang together in the volunteer choir of the little English chapel that raised its cross opposite the hotel.

II.

LEDYARD spent the following winter in London. He was studying law in a desultory way, and he found he had much time at his disposal. A goodly part of it he passed pleasantly enough at his uncle's home, to which he had been given a key, with the information that a knife and fork always awaited him, and that the third floor front was ever ready for him.

Mrs. Remington was singing that January night, soon after their return, as he let himself in; and, drawing off his overcoat, he handed it to the footman, who had been drowsing in one of the carved hall chairs. Her voice came to him from the drawing-room, and it seemed to him, even then, as he stood straightening his white tie before the mirror in the hall, that there was something pathetic in its ring.

He sought her unannounced, as was his habit, and stood for a moment on the threshold, gazing at her, seated at the piano, before she was aware of his presence. He observed that there were tears in her eyes and instinctively his resentment rose against Remington, who, he believed, was responsible for them. She impressed him as very beautiful.

He had always thought her pretty, but there was something in the glow that the red lampshade shed upon her at that moment that reminded him of a portrait he had seen in the Luxembourg. A portrait of the "Duchess de M." it was marked, and he had gone day after day to stand before that picture and drink in its wondrous charm. He now thought that the reality with this suggestion was far more alluring than the original.

For a week Ledyard had been devoting himself energetically to the reading of law; but now, suddenly, all that he had read was gone from him, and in its stead had come this one figure—this woman that filled his whole soul. All his youthful spirits stirred within him. The resentment against Remington engendered a burning desire to recompense the wife for what he believed was her husband's neglect.

He stepped forward, and would have thrown his arms about her; but she looked up, with tears still trembling upon her lashes, and in her eyes was not what he had expected to see. There was confident reliance, rather than a longing for consolation.

"You have been crying!" he said, bluntly.

"Yes," she answered, without any effort at prevarication; "there is no use denying it. You can see for yourself—you are not blind."

"He has been unkind to you?" he went on, with a statement that was more than half question.

"No," she answered, "not unkind. I cannot say that he is unkind." And then she was silent.

He led her to a seat that occupied a corner of the room.

"Tell me," he pursued, taking her hand, "tell me what is the trouble. There is something wrong!"

She sat mute, her eyes fixed on the rug at their feet.

"I have heard the talk," he went on; "all the fellows at the club are saying, 'I told you so.' He was not the man to marry a young girl, as you are. You did not love him, as you should have loved him?"

Again it was a statement, but there was an implied question.

And she, wrought to a pitch that reckoned not the words, but spoke the truth, no matter who might be the hearer, responded:

"No! No! I did not understand. I was a child."

And then she fell to weeping again. Ledyard scarcely realising what he did, put his arm about her.

"Louise!" he urged. "Louise!" It was the first time he had called her by her Christian name, but he did not notice it; nor did she. "Louise! Don't. I beg of you. I cannot bear to see you unhappy. You——" and then, suddenly, "where is he?"

For a moment she did not answer.

"Where is your husband?" he again asked.

"I do not know," she said at last. "I told him to go out. I could not rest with him here, looking at me, contented, asking nothing, receiving nothing. He does not understand me. He made me so nervous. He drove me mad!"

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Still she was sobbing. Yorke drew her closer to him. On his cheek he felt her warm breath.

"It was a mistake," he cried. "It is horrible! You were not meant for a man of ice. You were meant for me!" His lips were upon her mouth. She struggled for a moment, but he held her closely.

Again and again he kissed her. And then, when for a moment he relaxed his grasp, she did not try to escape him.

Round his neck she fastened her bare arms and returned him, kiss for kiss, every caress he had given her.

III.

IN the spring Yorke Ledyard went abroad. Mr. and Mrs. Remington decided upon Devonshire for the summer, and their cottage was gay with a life it had not known for years.

All the world heard, a few weeks later, how Remington, at the risk of his life and at the expense of a broken collar-bone, saved his wife from probably instant death, by springing in front of a pair of spirited horses which she had attempted to drive, and which had got beyond her control. The incident was telegraphed everywhere and the society papers commented upon the loss that the fashionable world would have suffered had not Remington rushed to her rescue.

There was, however, no mention made of the fact that from that moment dated the birth of a wife's appreciation of a husband.

Remington's patience was at last rewarded.

In other words, Mrs. Remington had suddenly fallen head over ears in love with her husband. That her love was not untinged with remorse added rather than detracted from its strength.

Again and again she was tempted to make confession of that which stared her continually in the face, as a ghost of her unhappiness, but she was far too timid, and valued her new estate too highly. She consoled herself by the reflection that although she had been tempted severely enough she had never been untrue to her wifely vows.

Remington was in the seventh heaven of bliss. He had waited patiently and confidently. At last he had achieved his reward, and he envied no man. A few months slipped away and, for what reason nobody knew, he appeared at the club one afternoon offering wine to everyone that would drink it. A few months more and Remington seemed at all times perturbed.

One afternoon a messenger came to him at the club, and, hurriedly excusing himself, he rushed out and took a cab home.

"It is all over," said the footman, who opened the vestibule door. "Perhaps, sir, you had better go into the library until the doctor comes down."

Remington made no reply. He threw off his overcoat and had his foot on the stairs when the doctor intercepted him.

"One moment," he said.

"Ah! yes?" returned Remington, controlling himself with an effort.

"A boy!" returned the doctor.

IV.

THE funeral was over. Mother and child had been buried in the same grave; and the father sat crushed and alone in the boudoir that his young wife had illumined with her fresh, rare beauty.

He had been sitting there for hours, with his head buried in his hands. Now he rose and turned on the electric light. He made an effort to throw off his despondency, and told himself that it was unmanly to give way to grief. He turned to her escritoire at his left hand, and drew out a drawer. He might, he thought, find here some recollection, some souvenir of their married life, before—and then he hesitated.

If, he thought, he could only find something among her treasures that would signify that she had loved him all these months. There was no question as to her subsequent affection; but he longed to think that while he was patiently waiting for some sign, she, too, had been waiting, with her heart overrunning for the love that he longed to bestow.

The drawer contained only blank stationery.

He drew out another. It was filled with bills that he knew nothing of, that she had paid from her own private account.

He drew out a third. There were letters there from her girl friends. He read several, in the hopes of finding some allusion to a love that he only suspended. But he found nothing to gratify him.

He drew out a fourth. It contained a bundle of letters, tied with a blue ribbon. From the packet he abstracted one. The envelope was addressed in a masculine hand. The inclosure was a revelation.

He glanced at the clock. It indicated twenty minutes to midnight. He descended to the hall, gathered up his fur coat, and went out without a word.

At the corner he found a cab.

"Drive me to the Vladimir!" he said.

Mr. Ledyard had just returned. Would the gentleman send up his card? No; the gentleman would not send up his card. He was sure that Mr. Ledyard would receive him; he would go up.

The boy on the lift noticed that the gentleman's lip was bleeding.

V.

MR. YORKE LEDYARD rose from his easy-chair with an evening paper in his hand. He had returned late, and had just taken time to glance over the day's closing prices. At the entrance to the room stood his sombre-clad uncle, a sheet of notepaper in his hand.

Neither spoke. The elder simply extended the sheet of paper, and the younger, scarcely realising the gravity of the action, took it, as invited to, and read it.

Remington waited patiently.

"Well," he said, evidently restraining himself to the utmost until Ledyard had finished reading, "what have you to say?"

Ledyard crumpled the paper in his hand and threw it upon the floor.

"Nothing!" he returned.

"You have no defence?" continued the widower.

"None. Think and say what you like of me, but no blame attaches to your wife," replied the younger man.

Remington was very cool. He took a step further into the room.

"Do you know," he began, "what this means to me? Do you know that that piece of crumpled paper lying there is the wreck of my life? Do you know that it has robbed me of every tender remembrance of the woman and child that I have buried to-day? Do you know that? Do you understand that? And do you dare to confess that you are the author of it?"

Ledyard was silent.

"Answer it!" cried the elder man, with sudden vehemence.

"I know it!"

For an instant the lights in the room swam round as in a vortex; a table was knocked over and went spinning to the wall; a rug was turned inside out; there was a fall, and then all was still. For fully a minute one man stooped over the other. Then he rose to his feet, and, going out, quietly closed the door.

. . . . . .

The investigation of the coroner is of necessity hasty. A verdict found in accordance with the evidence declared that Mr. Yorke Ledyard came to his death from heart disease, from which, according to the testimony of his uncle, he had been subject for years.

And the undertaker, who found the marks of four fingers and a thumb upon the young man's throat, receipted the bill, when Remington handed him a cheque, without so much as a sign that he disagreed with the verdict.

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THE OUTLAWS' TREASURE.

Illustrated by MR. A. KEMP TEBBY.

SUMMARY.

The mail train has been robbed between Cornwall and La Grange stations, and £20,000 worth of gold stolen by a gang of desperadoes, headed by two brothers named Mulligan. Two passengers on the train—Adolph Squirrek, *alias* Smith, a detective tracking the Mulligans, and Fred Weldon, a young lawyer—who have struck up an acquaintance on the way, alight at Somerville, where the former stopped at the "Drover," and the latter at his mother's house. During the night a message comes to say that Judge Woodland's horse has come back alone, and Weldon, together with Squirrek and two other men set out to find him, and discover one of Mulligan's confederates lying senseless on the road. The man, who had made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the judge, is sentenced to forty years' imprisonment. At Judge Woodland's Weldon meets a Spaniard named Alvarido Almanaz, and the two men become rivals for the love of Florence, the judge's daughter. Weldon is inveigled to a lonely bridge near Cornwall, and disappears. Squirrek pays a fruitless visit to the spot.

CHAPTER XII. (*continued*).

The stranger listened very attentively during the recital of my pleasant yarn about the lost sermons, and I could see that he swallowed it all. It is not probable, at the first sight of me, that he suspected anything more than that I, Squirrek, was some friend searching for the body of Weldon.

A vast deal hinged upon the man's answer to my next question.

"I suppose, perhaps, the package fell into the stream, and has floated further down into the wood. Do you think there is any use in my searching further in that direction?"

Now, if he had said "No," it would have looked very dark for Frederick Weldon; in fact it would have said, "His dead body lies in that direction, and you will find it there, or at least you will discover enough to learn his fate."

But the man, without hesitation, replied: "Perhaps it is, and perhaps it isn't. It won't do any harm for you to look."

There was more in that reply than the man imagined, for it satisfied me that Frederick Weldon was still alive, although as to where he was, or what he could possibly be doing, was a matter of conjecture.

I hesitated awhile, undetermined whether to go further down the creek or not; but, on second thought, I ventured down, my country-looking friend going with me to look for the package of sermons, which I was pretty sure he would not find.

As may be supposed, I used my eyes with the keenness of a Comanche Indian; but I absolutely failed to discover anything, and, after going a distance of several hundred yards, I heaved a great sigh.

"I suppose these sermons will never be found again. The fact of it is, I don't believe he dropped them here."

I dropped in incidentally at his mother's.

"Maybe he sold them?" ventured my companion.

I smiled at this desperate attempt at a witticism, and putting on an expression of lugubrious alarm, I said:

"I tell you what, I begin to feel a little frightened."

"What about?" he asked.

"Haven't you heard of those dreadful men, the Mulligan brothers? They say they live somewhere about here, and only a little while ago they stopped and robbed the express train."

I scanned the counterfeit farmer, who scanned the counterfeit minister as closely; and, as each did his utmost to conceal his thoughts, it isn't probable that either was particularly enlightened. At any rate, I am certain he had no suspicion of the object of my question.

"I b'lieve there is such a gang," said he, "but I don't know anything about them. You ain't looking for anybody, are you?"

"Bless me!" I gasped, staring wonderingly at him, "what do you mean?"

"Nothin'. I didn't know but what you might be searching for some one."

"I'm afraid there will be some of the Mulligans searching for me," I returned, "so I'll leave."

As I turned about I saw the fellow's black eyes fixed searchingly upon me, as though a faint glimmering of the truth was creeping through his brain. He also changed about, and, side by side, we walked up out of the ravine, through which flows Devil's Creek.

If I could have felt certain that there was no one within call, I would have told this scoundrel plainly that a crime equivalent to murder had been committed there, and he knew all about it.

If he had attempted to bluster, I would as lief have put a bullet through his head as smoke my cigar, and it would have made the final extirpation of this gang so much the easier.

My object was now to draw him from the ravine as far away as possible, so that if any *coup d'état* should come about, I would have a clear track to Cornwall, without any danger of being thrown down the embankment. In my experience I have been compelled to give leg bail more than once, and have always found it a good thing to have the track clear ahead of you.

I think if I could have induced my companion to accompany me a few hundred yards further, an affair would have occurred which would have ended in a final extinguishment of one of the Mulligan gang; but unexpectedly he bade me good-day, and moved abruptly away.

I walked back to Cornwall, from which place I shall take the first train to Somerville, where I see a prospect of picking up and uniting a broken thread in this web of crime.

SOMERVILLE, FRIDAY.—I had a faint hope of finding my friend Weldon in this town, but was disappointed. He has not been here for a week, but as yet no concern had been excited by his absence. I dropped in incidentally at his mother's, who is a good, genial soul, and who received me with the politeness of a lady of the old school.

Her son, she said, was in Brampton, in his office, and would not be home for several weeks, as he told her he had important business on hand, which would probably keep him there longer than usual. But he writes home regularly every week, and she was looking daily for a letter.

To keep her mind at ease I will drop her a few lines from Brampton, with his name signed, the next time I am called to that town. His hand is easily imitated, and it will be an act of kindness towards her, although it may make some trouble if the poor fellow has really gone under.

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The evening is a mild and pleasant one, with a bright moon, and my next point is Judge Woodland's, where I am to hunt for the broken thread.

CHAPTER XIII.

FLORENCE HAS A VISITOR.

(From the Journal of Florence Woodland.)

SATURDAY, October.—I had a strange call last evening. Mr. Smith, a ministerial-looking gentleman, who is an old friend and acquaintance of father's, came to the front door at quite a late hour, and inquired who of the family were at home.

Father was away at Meltonville, and doesn't expect to be back until this evening. When informed of that he asked to see me.

When I came in I found him looking over my album. He proved to be very polite and entertaining, and after several inquiries regarding the health of father and myself, he began a general conversation, in which he showed such learning and information, that I was as much delighted as surprised. He has travelled from one end of the country to the other, and when I expressed some wonder at his cause for doing so, he admitted that he had been a spy for General Grant during the war, and he related a number of his adventures in such a manner that I listened like one charmed for fully two hours.

He held my album in his hand.

Then he made some reference to Frederick Weldon, and complimented him so pointedly—all the time looking keenly into my face—that I am sure I showed considerable embarrassment. He interested me greatly in the old playmate of my childhood, for whose talents and nobleness of character I always held the highest respect. Indeed, he brought him so prominently before me that I dreamt of him, and, singularly enough, it was as my plighted husband. Strange!

All this time he held my album in his hand, now and then looking casually in it. Finally, he remarked that he observed a beautiful piece of penmanship, but the words were in a language which he did not comprehend.

Upon looking over his shoulder I saw that he had it open at the place where Señor Almanaz had written, under my name, the well-known quotation from Don Quixote:

"A ella no la llega Elena, ni la alcanza Lucrecia, ni ostra alguna de las famosas mujeres, que viéron en las edadas pretéritas, griega, latina, ó barbara."

"If the sentiment is as beautiful as the penmanship, it is creditable to him certainly."

I translated it, "She is unexcelled by Helen, unrivalled by Lucretia, or any other heroine of ages past, whether Grecian," etc., etc., remarking at the same time that it was distasteful to me to repeat such hyperbolic flattery.

He then leant towards the lamp, scanned it very narrowly, glanced through the book in an indifferent manner, and laid it away. A few incidental inquiries regarding my Cuban friend followed, and then he bade me good evening, apologising for having remained so long.

In recalling the interview, I find that it leaves one name in my thoughts—Frederick Weldon.

Since his departure from Somerville I had almost lost sight of him; but I now see him as he was when a boy—handsome, talented, and chivalrous. He it was who carried my books to school for me; who helped me in my lessons; who was respected by his teachers, and loved by his playmates; who carried off the first prizes, and who bore his honours so modestly that none felt envy, but rejoiced in his success.

He it was who was the means of saving the child of the Widow Elsington, when her house was burned, and there was no man dared to climb through the fire and smoke to the blazing room. I can see him now, when he was only a boy, as he held the little one in his arms, and made his way over the flaming roof to the ladder, while we all shuddered and held our breath in an agony of fear.

But what does this mean? Surely my pen is wandering strangely—my mind must be still more out of its usual course.

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. SMITH GETS A WARNING.

(From the Journal of Adolph Squirrek, Detective.)

WEDNESDAY, October ——.—Eureka! I have it! The broken thread has been found and joined. Suspicion has become conviction, and a great obstruction is cleared from my path.

Events have crowded each other in such rapid succession that several days have passed before I could find time to take my pen in hand, and for some time I have been a sort of comet on its travels.

I found Florence Woodland a charming lady, and I can comprehend how a young volatile fellow like Fred Weldon should lose his heart entirely in her presence. The emotion of love, except in an incidental way, doesn't come within my province, yet it was no mistake of mine when I say a lurking fondness for the young man displayed itself during our interview. There is a clear field for him, the only danger being that of an ardent admiration for the handsome Cuban, Almanaz, upon the part of the young girl.

The admiration was duly magnified, as I discover from the private journal of my friend, who finally gets the suspicion that the señor is a detective working to accomplish the same ends with myself. If the black-eyed foreigner is such a character, he has thus far managed effectually to conceal it from me.

Upon reaching Brampton I sat down and penned a few lines to Mrs. Weldon, purporting to come from her son; but on second thoughts I concluded to destroy the note, as I can see, from the shape matters are taking, that it would seriously embarrass my plans. Much as I regret it, I fear the parent must undergo great agony in order to assist us in the recovery of her child.

From Brampton I reached Cornwall late on Saturday night. On Sunday, as is generally my custom, I attended divine service, and rested and thought.

Fred Weldon has not been missed yet, and several weeks may pass before his disappearance will attract the notice of his friends, except from the fact that it is known that he is a marked man

The only method of extirpating this gang is by organising a vigilance committee, and the moment is close at hand for doing it. There must come a sudden gust, a whirlwind that will set the community on fire, their passions must be roused to the fever heat, and these men must be hunted like wolves.

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This will end on the Mulligan gang, as they are generally known, but it will not reach them all—it is my work to add the finishing touches.

Feeling dissatisfied with the survey I made of Devil's Creek, I visited the place again on Monday. I passed several hundred yards up and down the stream, but discovered nothing out of the way, and did not even get a glimpse of my quondam acquaintance, the burlesque farmer.

But as I climbed up one side of the railway bank, a tall man did the same on the other side, directly opposite, and coming face to face, I recognised my gorgeous friend, Señor Almanaz.

The man was plainly surprised at seeing me here, and showed some embarrassment. As we have never been on very intimate terms, he merely lifted his hat, and walked down the line, while I took the opposite course towards Cornwall.

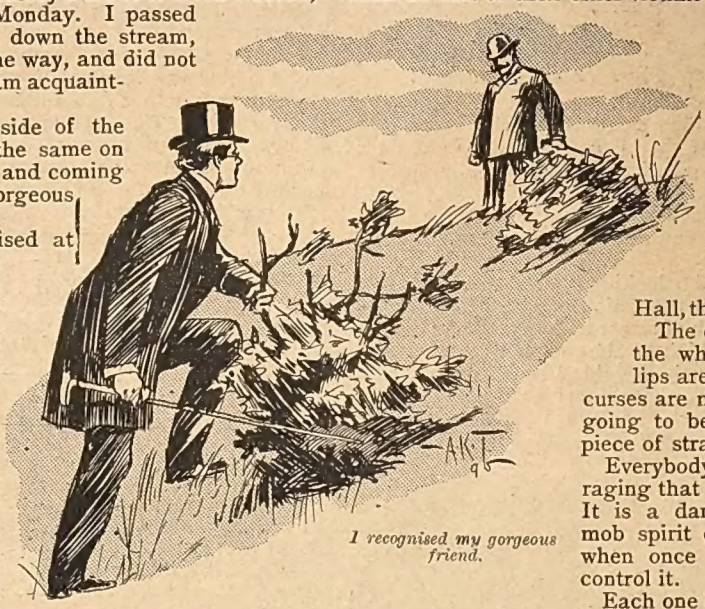
Reaching my hotel, I found a letter shoved under my door, which must have been placed there while the señor and myself were exploring the mysteries of Devil's Creek.

It contained only a few lines, but these were to the point:—

"Mr. Smith is hereby warned that his errand in this part of the country is understood, and that if he remains three days longer his fate will be that of his friend Weldon, and all others who make the attempt that he did."

The letter gave me great consolation, for it proved conclusively that Fred Weldon is alive, and is held somewhere as a sort of hostage, to be used in some contingency.

The time has come to strike!



I recognised my gorgeous friend.

CHAPTER XV.

THE VIGILANCE COMMITTEE.

THURSDAY, November 1. When the town of Cornwall rose this morning they found the fences, houses, gate-post, and every available place, covered with the following flaming posters:—

"*Citizens, Arouse!* — The time to strike has come! No man is safe! Crime stalks on every hand! Our brothers are murdered — unless checked it will soon be our turn! You all know what murders have been committed during the last few months. Frederick Weldon has been spirited away by the same red hands and Mr. Smith, his friend, has been warned that if he does not leave the country his fate shall be that of their other victims.

"Citizens! The Mulligan gang have put the last feather upon the camel's back! We have borne this too long! Let us band together, and swear not to stop until these wretches are hunted from the face of the earth!

"All in favour of organising a vigilance committee for the purpose of going to work, will meet at the Town Hall, this forenoon, at ten o'clock."

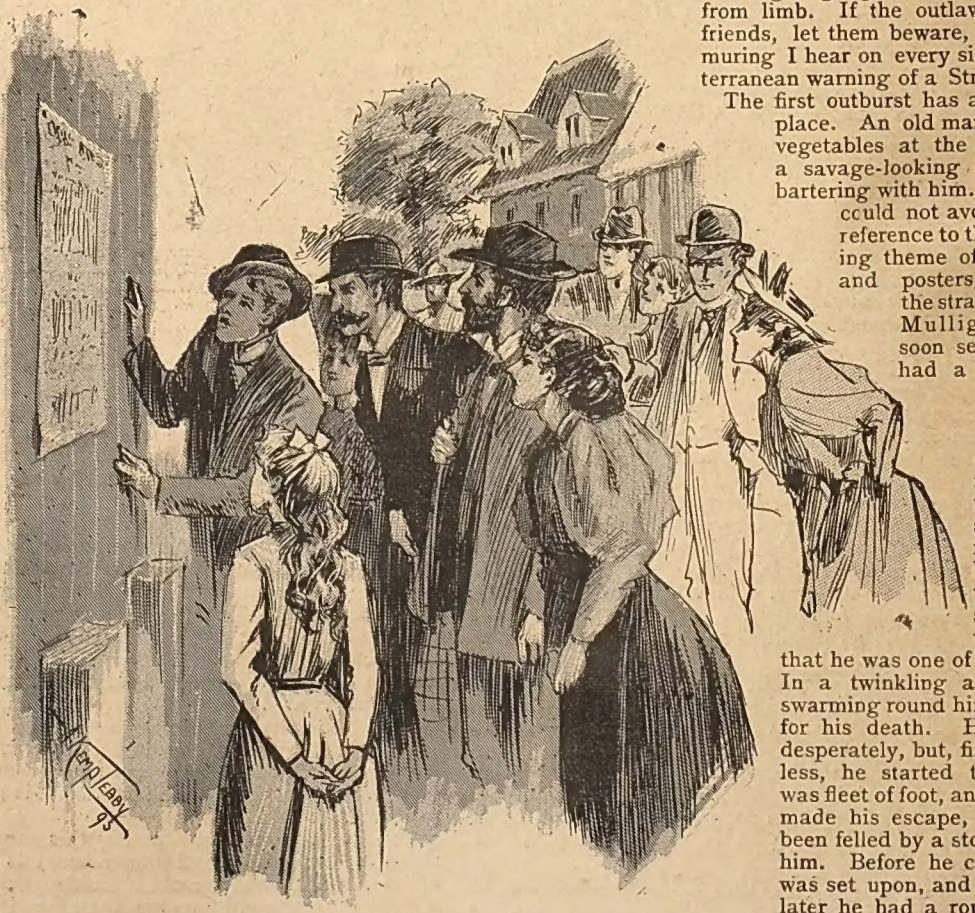
The excitement is at fever heat; the whole town is boiling over; lips are pressed, brows are knitted, curses are muttered, and I see there is going to be practical results from this piece of strategy.

Everybody is furious, everybody is raging that this has gone on so long. It is a dangerous thing to rouse the mob spirit of the American people, for when once aroused no one man can control it.

Each one is wild at his neighbour and wild at himself that they have been such cowards as to permit all this. If I should go in the street, and attempt to say a word in favour of the Mulligan gang, I would be torn limb from limb. If the outlaws have any friends, let them beware, for the murmuring I hear on every side is the subterranean warning of a Stromboli.

The first outburst has already taken place. An old man was selling vegetables at the corner, when a savage-looking fellow began bartering with him. The farmer could not avoid making a reference to the all absorbing theme of the outlaws and posters, whereupon the stranger said the Mulligans would soon settle all who had a hand in the business.

The words were scarce out of his mouth, when the farmer struck him a fierce, sudden blow, and at the same instant a shout was raised that he was one of the outlaws. In a twinkling a crowd was swarming round him, all yelling for his death. He struggled desperately, but, finding it useless, he started to run. He was fleet of foot, and might have made his escape, had he not been felled by a stone hurled at him. Before he could rise, he was set upon, and ten minutes later he had a rope round his neck, dangling from the sign



The excitement is at fever heat.

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Felled by a stone hurled at him.

of the hotel where I was stopping while in this town.

I went down and took a look at him. He proved to be the farmer, with the hoe on his shoulder, that I encountered the other day at Devil's Creek, so there is the satisfaction of knowing that the mob made no mistake in their victim.

Long before the hour of ten o'clock such a seething multitude had gathered round the Town Hall that it was plain that not a quarter of them could enter it. No one knew who had put up the hand-bills, and, seeing that the crowd needed a directing mind, I mounted a barrel, and shouted, "*Fellow Citizens!*"

In an instant every eye was upon me, and I heard the question, "Who is he?" repeated a score of times, in as many seconds. Had any one whispered at that moment that I belonged to the Mulligan gang, my life would not have been worth a rush.

"I am the Mr. Smith mentioned in the hand-bills," I shouted, and instantly there fell a hush upon them, and they were all my friends. "It is I who have been warned to leave this country, under pain of being put to death."

I then began a harangue. I pitched into the Mulligan crew and said that every minute's delay was a day's strength for these outlaws; that by this time they had learned of what we were doing, and they would be prepared for us; that we were *already marked men*, and if we didn't kill them, they would kill us.

Heavens! how that last remark had fired them up! It was like a torch thrown into a powder magazine. Men were darting hither and thither in search of arms. I called upon them to elect their leaders, and not to do it too blindly. Before I knew it they vociferously demanded that I should be their captain, and I consented, because there was no avoiding it, although there wasn't a man of them who had ever seen me before, except casually during the few days past.

The driver of the train, whose whistle was heard at the station, was ordered to wait fifteen minutes, until the vigilance company was ready, and upon repairing to the station, over a hundred armed men, many of whom had been veterans in the war, followed me while others tramped along in the rear.

I took a hundred with me, and ordered the driver to stop at the spot where the late robbery occurred, and let us out.

Those who could not go with us would not remain behind, and there must have been several hundreds who followed along the line on foot, behind us.

In the centre of the woods the train slackened, and disgorged my men. We were somewhere near the retreat of these outlaws, and were fully resolved to smoke them out.

It was known that the way to reach them was to follow up the creek, which led into swamp, but at this point we found ourselves somewhat at a disadvantage, as we had no boat, but I learnt from one of them, a daring young scout, who a few days before had explored the place at night, that the cabin in which they lived was upon a small island, only accessible by water.

The fever, which had maddened my men since morning, had had time to cool by this time, and I had them under control. I had appointed two lieutenants, the first of which was Belknap, the scout referred to, and the other a comrade, both of whom, it was evident, were very popular among their friends.

While we were discussing the best manner to overcome our disadvantage, an unlooked-for occurrence brought the solution.

CHAPTER XVI.

BEARDING THE LIONS.

SUDDENLY a small boat rounded a curve in the creek, in which were seated two men, with a negro rowing. I had not even seen them, when shouts were excitedly uttered by half my company, and as many fired a volley into the canoe.

Almost at the same instant Belknap leapt into the water and swam to the boat, the inmates of which, it was safe to say, were riddled with bullets.

Upon towing it ashore, the two white men were found stone dead, but the negro still breathed. Understanding that they were from the island, and, seeing that he could live but a few moments, I leant over him and asked him whether the Mulligans were at their cabin, but the faithful fellow shook his head and refused to answer. I then asked how many there were there, but he would not be caught. Then I put the most important query of all:

"Is there a young man held prisoner there, or do you know whether your men have any such person in their power anywhere, or whether they have killed such a man within a few days?"

He looked earnestly at me for a few minutes, and then opened his lips to speak. He did utter something, but I failed to catch it, and ere he could repeat the words he died.

Here were three of the Mulligan gang, counting the one lynched a few hours before, and omitting the negro, who

Fired a volley into the canoe.

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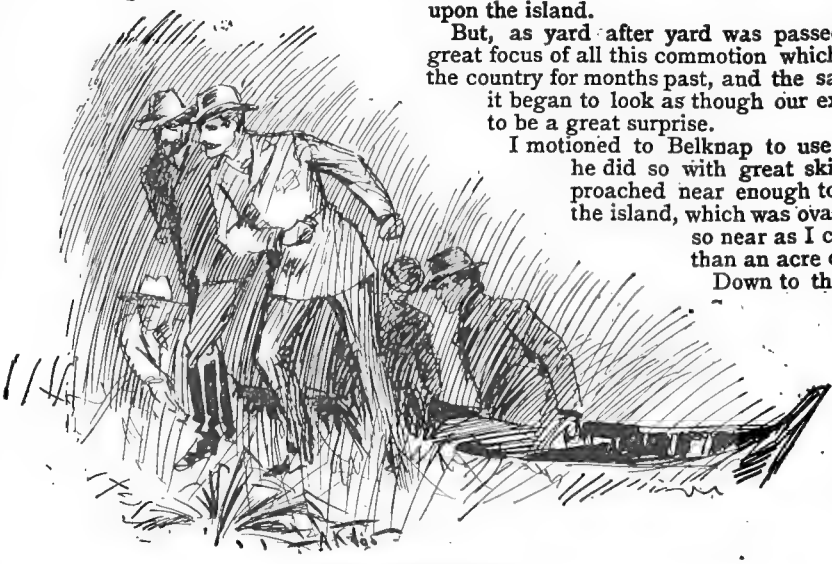
were already killed, and a fourth, "poor Tom Borie," secure in gaol, so that my friends were disposed already to look upon the work as half done.

Two plans of procedure were now discussed. One was to go back to Cornwall and secure a small cannon with which to bombard the island from the shore, a proceeding which would incur no personal risk upon our part, and at the same time be attended with sure results. The second plan was to go ahead.

In support of the latter it was argued that there could not be more than four or five men upon the island at the most, and what little risk there was to run in capturing them was not to be considered.

So the latter was agreed upon, and we began swarming and tramping up the marshy bank of the creek, Belknap somewhat ahead of us in the canoe, on the lookout for danger, and ready to apprise us of anything that might be descried.



We stepped out like phantoms.

The bodies of the two outlaws and negro were allowed to lie on the shore, near where they were shot. "Let the dead bury the dead," was the thought of each, "for we are after the living."

It was a long tramp up the creek, and at times I thought we should be compelled to give over the effort of forcing our way through the swamp; but we persevered, and after making several turns, Belknap held up his hand as a signal that he descried something.

Paddling cautiously back again he announced that the island was just ahead, but there were no signs to be seen of any person upon it.

"That amounts to nothing," said I. "If they were there, of course they would take pains to conceal themselves."

"I am ready to make straight for the island," he replied, "if half a dozen will go with me."

The whole hundred were ready, and, as leader, it never would have done for me to refuse, although there was no question about the rashness of this blind proceeding.

So I took my seat in the canoe, with five others, which sank it down to its gunwales, and Belknap headed straight towards the island. As we skimmed lightly across the smooth lake I am sure each one in the boat was reflecting upon the fact that we could not have made ourselves finer targets for those upon the island.

But, as yard after yard was passed, and we neared the great focus of all this commotion which had spread out over the country for months past, and the same silence continued, it began to look as though our expedition was destined to be a great surprise.

I motioned to Belknap to use his oars silently, and he did so with great skill. We had soon approached near enough to gain a correct view of the island, which was oval in shape, and covered, so near as I could judge, a little less than an acre of the lake.

Down to the water's edge grew a rank, exuberant vegetation, resembling the tropical luxuriance which I have seen in the Carolina swamps; but there were no trees, and we could barely discern the outlines of the cabin roof, where those famous outlaws had made their home.

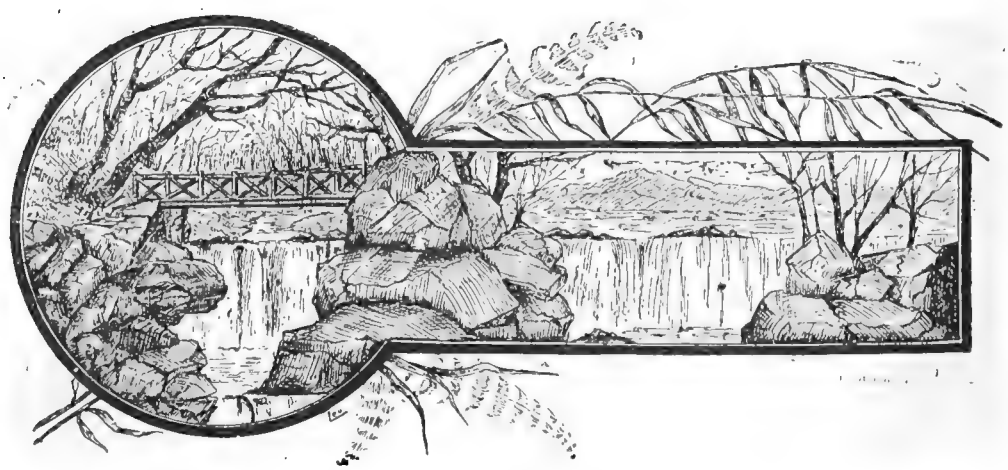
A silence rested upon the scene, which was made more impressive by the faint wash of our canoe against the current, and the soft ripple of Belknap's oar.

None of us spoke. All seemed to hold their breath in the intensity of expectation. A moment later the prow softly touched the green bank, and we stepped out like phantoms.

The Rubicon had been crossed, our bridges were burned behind us; there was no retreat, and if Dick and Tom Mulligan with their two desperate companions were there, a fight was inevitable—a fight that was to be "to the death."

Realising this, we carefully examined our rifles, and then headed by myself, moved stealthily towards the cabin.

(To be continued.)



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Robin Hood up to Date

It was not for nothing that Charlotte d'Urlac had been a wife for five years. To-day, when she wanted anything from her husband, she set about it in the simplest possible way. A bit of a gourmand, he loved good cheer, and knew not how to refuse his wife anything when he had dined and wined particularly well.

Naturally, then, I say, when she specially desired something, she carried him off to some famous restaurant, and, the proper moment arriving—between two glasses of sparkling Pomard, or perhaps Yellow Seal—gently glided her confidences into his ear.

Well for more than a week now she had been revolving in her naughty head a project how to make her husband proffer her a certain beautiful little pin—three dainty, ruby-studded little beetles quivering on a golden stem—that she had seen in the window one day in passing Sarony's, and that would look so well, she thought, at her pretty throat, with a velvet love-knot tied beneath it.

Unfortunately, the trinket cost 300 francs, and the matter would truly be difficult to bring about. No matter; Charlotte was brave—"nothing venture, nothing have!" When Gerald returned from business that evening she baited her hook at once with the usual temptation.

"Only," she said, "let us try to-night the Restaurant Peter's, for nowhere else in the city can one find such lobster frappe."

Gerald objected a little at first, for the sake of form, but yielded graciously, and they were soon installed at a table for two in the Peter's Café, and busily engaged in discussing a dinner that this wise little woman, charged with the ordering of the same, had seen to it should be lacking in nothing.

Fifteen minutes after the opening *consommé*, and a slice of turbot, Gerald d'Urlac smiled like a new made bridegroom, found everything delicious, and his wife so unusually charming, that in spite of the five years of married life between them, beamed upon her like a lover and declared himself "almost ready to commit any folly for her."

"Good!" said Charlotte, smiling a little at the success of her ruse, "some day, soon, perhaps, Gerald, I'll remind you of that."

"As you like, dearest; but, see you, Charlotte, what are you plotting now in that sly little head of yours? No matter; pass me the truffle; we'll talk of this later on."

And the dining went on so beautifully that Master Gerald was decidedly in a good humour, when, all at once, he ceased to smile, set down his wine-glass hard, and said in an undertone to his wife:

"That man below there, to the left—why does he stare at us so? No, don't look; all the same, it's annoying."

The "man to the left," in fact, was only some two or three tables back, and dining alone. A very elegant gentleman, besides, but of an elegance a trifle suspicious, and under which the practised eye would have divined the adventurer.

"Oh, well, never mind," said Charlotte cheerfully, "try these *entrées*, Gerald."

But the charm was broken, the end of the dinner suffered and M. d'Urlac, his cigar well lighted, the change from a 500 franc note safe in his pocket, was ready to depart.

Charlotte was uneasy. Clouds were gathering on the domestic horizon—the risk, however, worth taking, she'd make at least the effort.

"Let us talk of it now," murmured she softly in Gerald's ear, "that folly you were so ready to commit for me; you are—you are willing still, I suppose?"

"Yes, yes, certainly—that is, if it's reasonable."

"Of course it's reasonable; only to go down the boulevard with me as far as Sarony's."

"Boulevard! Sarony's! But, Charlotte—ah-h, I begin to see!"

"What if you do, Gerald? Didn't you say, a while ago—but come on, come on, Gerald, do come on."

And Gerald permitted himself to be led, but without enthusiasm, from the café to the boulevard, and thence on till they reached Sarony's.

Charlotte breathlessly clutched her husband's arm.

"There," she said, "there, see for yourself!"

That beautiful little pin, all glowing and flashing with crimson splendour in the white light of the electric light!

But scarcely had Gerald set eyes on it and the price beside it when his wife saw him start.

"Three hundred francs, Charlotte, for a thing like that! It's madness, madness, my dearest, sheer madness! What could you have been thinking about?"

"But you said, Gerald, you said awhile ago——"

"I know, I know exactly what I said, but, of course, I meant a reasonable folly, Charlotte! And—and—300 francs, you understand. Come, come, dearest, we must go on——"

Just at this moment the crowd about the window gave a sudden surge, and Gerald d'Urlac fancied that he felt a blow in the chest. He wheeled about fiercely to find himself nose to nose with an elegant gentleman.

The elegant gentleman of the Peter's Café? Precisely; who, with a thousand and one excuses for his unavoided awkwardness, glided down the boulevard with a rapid step.

"How queer!" cried Gerald, as he vanished from sight, "that man was still at the table when we left the restaurant; he must have followed us. Charlotte"—a sharp suspicion flashing into his mind that possibly his wife's beautiful face had something to do with the pursuit—"our business is finished here. It is time to go home."

But Charlotte did not respond. Home or elsewhere, it was all one to her now. All chance of the pin gone, like a child whose caprice has been crossed and refused, nothing longer had power to please her. Mechanically she accepted her husband's arm, and they regained their dwelling without speaking a word, in the sorrowful disenchantment that always follows a pleasure that has missed its end.

. . . . . .

Scarcely, however, had they entered the house, the silence between them still unbroken, when Gerald uttered an exclamation.

"Charlotte! Charlotte, I say!"

"Well, what is it, Gerald? Why do you cry out like that?"

"My pocketbook's gone, my cards, my bank notes, all the change returned me at the restaurant—over a thousand francs in all!"

"This finishes it!" cried Charlotte, tragically. "Everything has gone wrong to-day. But how careless, Gerald, to have dropped the book from your pocket like that."

"Careless! Dropped it from my pocket! You've lost your senses, Charlotte. Stolen from my pocket, you should have said. That man at the restaurant—that man who ran into me in front of Sarony's—'twas he, 'twas he! I know it was he!"

"Pooh! Nonsense! You dropped it, I tell you—perhaps at the table, paying the bill."

"Maybe I did. At all events, I'll stop at the café on my way to the station."

Vain hope! Vain trip! Forty minutes later Gerald returned, with face gloomier than ever. The restaurant had seen

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nothing of the book, and the police promised still less of the thief.

"But for that pin, it wouldn't have happened!" cried Gerald angrily.

"And had you bought the pin for me, as I wanted you to do," Charlotte returned with equal fervour, "there would only have been 1,000 francs, less 300, for the thief to have stolen!"

"Good! Excellent! Admirably reasoned! But if you really think, Charlotte——"

"Nothing, nothing, whatever, save that I'm sleepy, that I'm going to bed; we'll continue the dispute to-morrow, if you will. Good-night, M. d'Urlac."

And Charlotte was gone.

At dawn, however, the discussion was recommenced. It lasted till breakfast time, and also through breakfast more and more stormy. They were still at table and still wrangling, when the bell was pulled violently, and the servant entered with a package for Mme. d'Urlac.

"Good gracious, Gerald, your papers!" Charlotte cried out, as the wrappings fell apart.

"By George so they are—minus the pocket-book! But, quick, go on, Charlotte. Is there nothing else—no word, no sign of any kind?"

"Yes, how odd, and—and a little box—my pin, my beetles, Gerald!" throwing up her hands with a cry of bewilderment, "and see—a note with it!"

And Charlotte began to read it feverishly.

"My Dear Madame,—Once upon a time, as you doubtless remember, recalling history, there was a certain bandit of a certain century, who possessed at least the virtue of being gallant. He ruthlessly robbed men, it is true, but never a lady, particularly those that had youth and beauty as great as your own. Robin of the Woods' case was my case also. Briefly, I have robbed your husband—a man—but to you, a lady, I beg leave to offer this little trinket I know you greatly desire, since I stood immediately behind you when you vainly besought M. d'Urlac to give it to you—beg leave to offer you, I repeat, this little trinket, in testimony of the great respect I feel for all your sex.

"Such ungallant conduct on the part of a man and husband required a lesson. I have, therefore, no remorse in retaining for personal use seven hundred and odd of the thousand and odd francs contained in the pocket-book. The three hundred others, be good enough to explain to him for me, having permitted a great criminal to repair, in a measure, the wrong committed by an honest man. The book itself—a very convenient one, by the way—I also retain, but herewith inclose the papers and cards of which I should be grieved to longer deprive M. d'Urlac.

"Pray believe me, Madame, in the sentiments of respectful humility, &c., &c., "The Guilty Man."

"And also, Charlotte, if you please," cried Gerald d'Urlac, with eyes from which amazement and mirth had long since driven the anger, "in the respectful humility of a fool; for fool I was that I did not then, and do not always give in to your caprices. Heaven wills that wives and women will, and husbands always have to pay the piper. Come, kiss and be friends."

A PRECIOUS RELIC.

"But, uncle, I love Rose!" I protested once more.

"Go about your business."

"Give her to me."

"You will weary of her!"

"I would die for her!"

"You would soon be consoled."

"But——"

My uncle turned from me, as red as scarlet, and struck his fist upon his desk. "Never!" he cried. "Never! Do you hear me?"

I looked at him with supplicating eyes and clasped hands, while he continued: "Look at this nice husband, who is penniless and thinks already of beginning housekeeping. A pretty mess I should make to give you my ward, who is to inherit all I have! I have said no, and it is useless for you to try to make me say yes!"

I insisted no longer. I knew that my uncle was the most headstrong of men.

I simply heaved a deep sigh, and resumed the scouring of a long gun covered with rust.

This memorable conversation took place one morning in summer in the shop of my maternal uncle, an established dealer in antiquities and objects of art, in Wardour Street. It was a shop having an excellent patronage, and it was a veritable museum.

On its walls hung *faiences* from Marseilles and old Rouen, while opposite them were old coats of armour, sabres, guns, and boxes of pictures. In all directions were old sideboards, chests of all sorts, statuettes of saints, armless or legless for the most part, or from which the gilding was fast fading; books, large and small; all forms of lachrymatories, tiny urns, rings, precious stones, fragments of marble, bracelets, crosses, necklaces, medals, and little images in ivory, whose yellow tint would appear for an instant in the sun to have the transparency of real flesh.

The shop had belonged to the Stimsons from time immemorial. It had passed regularly from father to son, and my uncle, according to what his neighbours said, ought to be pretty well off, for, besides his business, he held office for the County Council. He was a large, fat man, short of limb, very quick-tempered and headstrong, but not unkind in the main. Such was my Uncle Stimson, my only relative on earth, who had educated me, and then raised me to the dignity of first and only clerk in his shop.

But my uncle was not only dealer in antiquities and clerk of the County Council. He was also, and above all, the guardian and sole protector of the beautiful daughter of an old friend, who had left her to him. Her name was Rose, and I was hopelessly in love with her. And do you ask, how did she look? Why, what shall I say? Is not the one we love always beautiful, and does she not seem to be the best of all good maidens? I loved Rose with my eyes, as with my heart; and, to tell the truth, I knew that I was not displeasing to her. It seemed as if we had always loved each other, since the far-off times of the holidays, when I had picked for her the most beautiful flowers of the garden, or when, seated on the grass, we took our lunch together.

I return now to my uncle, who, at my side, without heeding my sighs while I continued to clean my long gun, was examining, glass in hand, a lot of old medals, brought in that same morning.

Suddenly he raised his hand. Five o'clock struck.

"Ah, that reminds me," said my uncle, "that I must go to the station to get a parcel which was to come to-day."

Rising, he put the glass upon the table, and called, "Rose, my stick and my hat!" Then turning towards me, "As to you"—he spoke very low and very rapidly—"do not forget our conversation. If you think to force me to say yes, try it; but I doubt your ability. In the meantime, not a word to Rose, or believe me, I will put you out of the door immediately."

Rose quickly entered, bringing the stick and hat, which she held towards her guardian; he kissed her upon her forehead,

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then, casting on me a last eloquent look, he went brusquely out. I continued to burnish my gun. Rose gently approached me.

"Why, what is the matter with him?" she asked. "One would think he was angry with you!"

I looked at her. Her eyes were so dark, her expression so angelic, her lips so rosy, and her teeth so white that I told her all my love, and of my demand and my uncle's brutal refusal.

Rose answered nothing. She lowered her eyes and blushed like a cherry. I stopped. "Are you angry with me?" I asked trembling all over. "Rose, you do not wish to have me for a lover!"

She extended her hand to me. Then my heart bounded, and my head took fire. I cried, "Rose, I swear to you I will be your husband!" As she shook her head, looking at me sadly, I added, "Oh, I know my uncle is obstinate, but I will be more obstinate than he! I will force him to say yes!"

"But how?" asked Rose. It was just there that the difficulty lay! No matter. I would find a way. Just then we heard a step in the street. Instinctively we separated. I recommenced my scouring, and Rose, to keep herself in countenance, began to wipe with a corner of her apron a little statuette which rested on a cushion of faded velvet.

My uncle entered. He was evidently surprised to see us together, and looked suspiciously first at me and then at her.

We rubbed away vigorously, without raising our heads.

"Here, take this," he said abruptly, extending to me a large packet which he carried under his arm. "It is a superb purchase, you will see."

I did not care at all about it, but I opened the package. From its wrappings emerged a helmet—not at all an ordinary helmet, but a superb casque of monumental size, with a collar-band and pointed visor of singular shape. The visor was raised. I turned the helmet between my hands. My uncle approached. "Oh, it is impossible to shut the visor! The hinge is strained. The helmet is, nevertheless, a superb piece, and well burnished will have a beautiful effect. That will be your work to-morrow."

"Yes, uncle," I murmured, for I dare not yet raise my eyes to his face.

That evening I retired early to my chamber and went at once to bed. I wished to be alone, so that I might think things over. "The night gives council," is an old adage, and I had great need that the proverb prove true. In an hour or so I fell asleep. Not till morning did anything occur to me but indifferent dreams; then I had a strange vision. I saw Rose coming out of church in the lovely toilette of a bride. She wore an exceedingly tall head-dress, yet it was very pretty. Then suddenly the picture changed. It was moonlight, and there was a frightful crowd of helmets and old china, with my uncle brandishing a halberd in his hand and conducting a dance.

. . . . . .

The next day! Ah! the next day! I shall never forget it. Although I was madly burnishing the enormous helmet which had been brought in the previous evening, and grinding my teeth with rage, yet all my energy could not suggest to me a way out of my dilemma.

The helmet shone like the sun. My uncle smoked his pipe, all the while looking at me, but not a single idea came to my assistance. No plan had revealed itself to me to force him to yield to me the hand of his ward.

"It shines finely," he said. "Now leave it." I left it. A storm was brewing surely. Would it break on me? I determined to let it pass, if possible. Suddenly, seized by a strange idea, my uncle, taking the helmet in his hands, turned it round, studying all sides of it. "A beautiful piece, indeed, but my faith! it must weigh heavily on one's shoulders!"

I know not what good spirit impelled him, but he shook the helmet, put it on, and tightened the neck-piece.

Amazed, I looked at him. Certainly this head-gear was anything but becoming to him. At that moment the sound of a rusty spring which unbinds itself was plainly heard, and bang! the visor flattened, and behold, my uncle had his head completely shut up behind immovable bars, and the prisoner was gesticulating and crying like a heathen.

I burst out laughing. Indeed, my uncle, with his enormous girth and short legs, and with this casque on his head, was a grotesque spectacle.

He advanced towards me.

"The hinge!" he cried. "The hinge, imbecile! Did not you hear it crack?"

I kept on laughing, and could not speak a word. The helmet wriggled about so comically on his shoulders, and his voice sounded to me so queer from within it, while he was gesticulating and screeching and threatening me, that I could not stop laughing to save my life.

At this crisis two o'clock struck.

"The Council!" murmured my uncle in a stifled voice. "Get this helmet off from me as quickly as you can. We will settle our differences afterwards."

But happily an idea had come to me. I had become desperate. I responded, "No, I will not get the helmet off."

My uncle drew back thunderstruck, and again the helmet began to rock on his shoulders.

"No," I again responded with a firm voice. "I will not help you to take off the helmet until you promise to let me marry Rose."

From beneath the visor came forth no longer a cry, but a veritable groan.

"And if you will not give her to me," I added, "I will not only refuse to unclasp the helmet, but I will run to the door and call in all your neighbours. I will go to the County Council and report your condition to them."

"You shall perish upon the scaffold!" came in husky tones from beneath the helmet.

"The hand of Rose!" I cried. "You have said nothing should force you to respond yes; but respond yes you must. Decide quickly!" I cried. "Some one is coming."

"Oh, yes! yes!" murmured my uncle, "yes, but do hurry!"

"Your word!" "My word."

Then I went to him, and with a resolute snap of my finger unlocked the spring.

The visor yielded, the neck-band also, and the head of my uncle emerged from beneath, as red as a poppy.

It was time. A friend of my uncle in the County Council entered immediately.

"Come!" he said, on the threshold, "we are late!"

"I am coming!" responded my uncle, and without looking at me he took his hat and stick and went out.

. . . . . .

Alas! all my hopes now fled. My uncle would surely not pardon me.

That evening, when the dinner hour came, I sadly seated myself at the table opposite him. He ate without saying a word. I thought he was only waiting till dessert to give expression to his wrath.

Rose looked at me, but I avoided her glance. At dessert my uncle lighted his pipe, and raised his head with an air of decision. "Rose!" he called.

Rose approached. "Do you know what this great boy demanded yesterday?"

I trembled like a leaf. So did Rose.

"Your hand!" he continued, and then, "Do you love him?"

Rose lowered her eyes.

"Well!" continued my uncle, "in that case the matter is settled. Come here to me."

He began to laugh. "Marry her, then, imbecile, since you love her, and I give her!"

Rose and I cast ourselves into his arms.

"That is good, very good, do as you wish, and be happy, that is all;" but in turning he leant towards me and added, "I will not give her yet, silly fellow, unless that incident of the helmet remains a secret between us."

My word for it, I have never until now related it to anyone but Rose, my dear little wife; and if ever you pass along Wardour Street, come in, and in a place of honour in the old shop I will show you my uncle's helmet. We have never wished to sell it.

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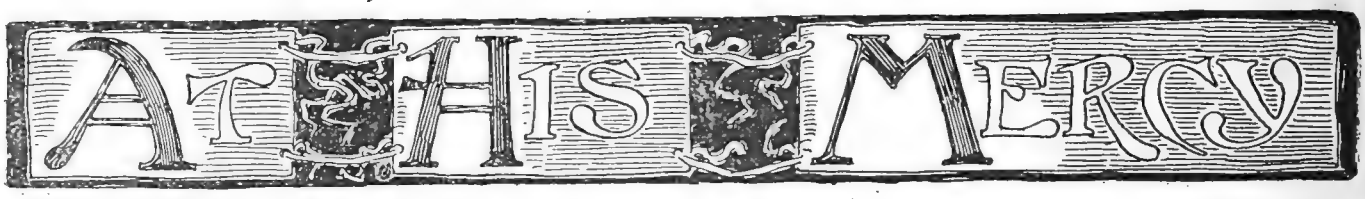

IT was my first *table d'hôte* dinner at the Hotel de Nice. As it was only nearing the end of October, visitors to the South were as yet few and far between, and of a distinctly uninteresting order. Whilst my eyes were straying over the elderly commonplace Darby and Joans gathered round the festive board, I began to regret my choice of a domicile, and involuntarily formed plans for beating a speedy retreat on the morrow.

I was what is known as a crusty bachelor, and, worse, of uncertain age. The former fact troubled match-making mothers more than myself, as my comfortable independence rendered me comparatively content, and I did not yearn for the joys of a fireside of my own and someone else to spend my money.

My greatest and most absorbing interest was centred in humanity. I was an ardent psychological student, and, in consequence, liked to surround myself with youthful society and watch the buds unfold, as it were.

As I disconsolately finished my bottle of Beaune—I was feeling very dull—a rustle of feminine garments attracted my attention, and, as I slightly turned my head, a stately lady, dressed in black, accompanied by a singularly pretty daughter, passed the end of the table and were accommodated with seats exactly opposite to me.

The experience of years at once told me that the younger lady would form a most interesting psychological study, and I immediately resigned all thought of giving up my room on the morrow and busied myself with attending to the small wants of my charming *vis-à-vis*. She could not have been more than nineteen years old, and her face was as sweet and innocent looking as a child's, though her principal beauty lay in her eyes, which were of a deep, intense blue, and very large and full, with a dreamy, unfathomable expression.

Later in the evening I smoked a cigar with the manager and in the course of conversation learnt that the lady in black was a Mrs. Hillyard, widow of a county magnate, and that she was wintering abroad for the benefit of her daughter—a highly nervous and delicate girl.

In the course of a few days I was able to render Mrs. Hillyard some slight service, and the acquaintance thus begun soon developed into a sincere friendship. She was a very chatty, well-informed woman, and I passed many pleasant hours in her society while silently pursuing my investigation of her daughter. The latter required a lot of knowing, and it took quite a month of constant intercourse with her before I felt that we understood each other. I discovered her to be an unusually pure-minded, and high-souled girl of a very quiet and reticent disposition. Her mother frankly confessed that to her she was a complete enigma.

"She has never been different, Mr. Blaine," she said, sadly; "it seems impossible to interest her in anything. From her earliest years she has been the same, and never took to romping or toys like other children. If I were superstitious—which, thank goodness, I'm not—I should believe that poor Evelyn was under some malign influence. When she was at a boarding-school her fellow pupils used to say that that far-seeing look she has in her mournful eyes betokened an early death or a tragedy. Of course, that is all nonsense; still, I would give a good deal to see her different."

I suggested that there may have been an unfortunate attachment to account for Miss Hillyard's despondency, but this her mother vehemently negatived.

"She has never shown the slightest partiality for any one," she resumed. "I only wish she would, for it might be the dawn of a new existence for her. She has had many admirers and several offers of marriage, but she has refused them all. She likes reading, though, not novels, as you may suppose, but what I call creepy literature; and if she has a real liking for anything it is music. I have seen her spellbound at a Paderewski recital or listening to an oratorio."

"Alas, we have no Paderewskis here to wake the sleeping soul," I observed, glancing round the stiffly furnished apartment and its inmates, some of whom, ensconced in armchairs, were sleeping, not wisely, but too well, as various stentorian snores testified; while others were absorbed in their game of chess or backgammon—clearly not an assemblage to interest a young girl. In point of fact, Miss Hillyard always made a rule of retiring to her own room immediately after dinner.

A day or two later I was smoking and lounging in the reading room, when I heard some one performing magnificently on the Erard grand pianoforte in the drawing-room. I don't set up to be a musician, or even to understand the art, but it would have been an unfeeling soul indeed which could remain unmoved at that glorious harmony of sound.

I threw away my cigar and sallied forth to see who the unknown genius could be, when, just as I reached the hall, I met Miss Hillyard at the foot of the stairs. The girl was completely transformed. Her eyes glittered with some strange emotion and a mist of unshed tears; her face was flushed crimson and her lips trembled. She passed me without recognition and I could see that her hands were clasped convulsively. She stole into the drawing-room so softly that the player was unconscious of her presence, and I, seeing how deeply she was moved, forbore to intrude, and took a seat in the vestibule instead.

When the music ceased I heard the sound of voices. The kindred souls had discovered each other. I do not know how long they remained together, as I went for my usual constitutional, and when I returned, the gong had already sounded for *table d'hôte*. If it had not been for my afternoon experience I should have marvelled at the change in my young friend. I had never seen her look more lovely.

She was dressed in cream, and wore a great bunch of red roses at her waist—the first touch of coquetry I had ever observed in her. I also noticed that the stranger had been placed on the same side as myself, a little higher up, and that he and Evelyn were constantly looking at each other. As her eyes met his a faint blush would steal over her face and she would look down confusedly.

After this I was not surprised to find that she no longer absented herself in the evenings. Mr. Gerard, the new-comer, proved unremitting in his attentions and music now formed the principal attraction of the drawing-room. He was certainly rather good-looking, of the bold brigand type, which some women find so irresistible, and it was easy to see that he soon obtained complete mastery over Evelyn, and that his will was her will.

Personally I never liked him, although he strove to ingratiate himself with everyone. To me there was something mysterious about him, and I warned Mrs. Hillyard not to let her daughter become too friendly. I am afraid she rather resented my interference, thinking herself capable of managing her own affairs, and so she drifted on to the rocks like many a good woman has done before her. She protested that the love of music was the sole bond between them, and so I let her have her way.

One afternoon I was standing in the conservatory which opened out of the drawing-room and was concealed by draperies, when I heard the sound of voices, which I immediately recognised as belonging to Gerard and Miss Hillyard. Before I had time to move, a fragment of their conversation reached me, which made me feel extremely uneasy. Gerard's

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tones sounded pleading, yet imperative and I could just see through a division in the drapery that her hand was closely clasped in his.

"You want money, and you must have it," I heard him say.

"I want money and I must have it," she repeated after him. Then their voices dropped to a whisper, but I had heard sufficient to give me food for reflection. Here was a girl environed with luxury, with a parent of undisputed wealth who never refused her anything, making confession of poverty to a man to whom a few weeks before she had been an absolute stranger. I decided to say nothing to her mother, but to await further developments quietly. But a new sensation was preparing, which, for the time, turned my thoughts in another direction.

For some time past a series of cleverly-planned robberies had taken place in the hotel, watches, jewellery, and cash had disappeared from the visitors' rooms in the most mysterious manner. Among the greatest victims was Mrs. Hillyard, who missed a splendid tiara of diamonds. The manager, who was a thoroughly honest, straightforward fellow, was greatly upset, the more so as Mrs. Hillyard had threatened to bring an action against the proprietors for the value of her property. As I had plenty of time on my hands, I promised to assist him in trying to discover the thief.

As a rule I never entered my room after dinner till I finally retired for the night, but on this particular evening I discovered that my cigar case was empty, and went upstairs to replenish it. The door was slightly ajar, and what was my amazement on walking in to see Evelyn Hillyard with my cashbox open before her and the contents in her hands.

I was too startled to say a word, and stood rooted to the spot inside the doorway through which she must pass. In silence I watched her drop the gold pieces into her pocket—there were but five of them—then she closed the lid, locked it with a key which she carried, and walked out of the room. Her eyes had the same peculiar expression that I noticed in them the day I met her on the stairs when Gerard was playing, and now, as then, she seemed quite unconscious of my presence.

This was a psychological study indeed! I felt it was well worth the £5 I had lost and more, too. I was greatly perplexed as to the best course to take in this most difficult position. The poor child was undoubtedly acting under the influence of the scoundrel Gerard; to expose her was out of the question. It would deal a death-blow to her mother and herself.

I determined to tackle Gerard, make him acknowledge his villainy, and return all the stolen articles which were undoubtedly in his possession. But in this I reckoned without my host, for the following morning the gentleman had gone. On making inquiries, I was informed that Mr. Gerard had received an urgent telegram summoning him to the deathbed of an uncle.

Poor Evelyn was very despondent all day, and her animation a thing of the past. I obtruded my society upon her very persistently in the hope of gleaning further information. I even asked her point blank where Gerard had gone, but she confessed herself to be in complete ignorance, and I am sure she spoke truly. He would soon return, she said, and he had promised to write. She also spoke accidentally of the wholesale thefts, and regretted the loss of her mother's jewels. I pitied her from the bottom of my heart for being such an expert criminal, and withal such an innocent one. I then and there made up my mind to track the real criminal, but as it happened I was saved the trouble.

After dinner I persuaded Evelyn to put on her hat and take a turn with me in the garden. It was a lovely moonlight night, clear as day, and with the soft balmy air redolent of roses. I was discussing the approaching Battle of Flowers with my companion, when she suddenly stood still, while a look of intense horror appeared upon her face and her eyes grew wild and unnatural. I could see nothing to account for her sudden terror, and was about to question her, when she gave a low wail of agony and fell unconscious at my feet.

It was a week before I saw her again, and then it was to say good-bye. She was altered beyond recognition and was only a wraith of her former self.

"You have been very kind to me, Mr. Blaine," she said simply, "and I feel that I owe you some explanation. You have perhaps guessed that Mr. Gerard was a dear friend of mine——" here she caught her breath and resumed with difficulty——"the night I was with you in the garden I saw a ghostly vision. Mr. Gerard stood before me, and as I looked he raised his hand and drew a knife across his throat—then I remembered no more." She shuddered violently as she spoke and sank exhausted into a chair.

"My dear child, why distress yourself with idle fancies?" I began, but she held up her finger to enjoin silence, and pushing a paper towards me said, "read that."

My eyes followed the paragraph, which ran as follows:—

"TERRIBLE TRAGEDY AT LIVERPOOL.

"Last evening, between eight and nine, a terrible tragedy was enacted in this city. The police having obtained a clue as to the whereabouts of the accomplished burglar, George Daly, *alias* Cecil Gerard, arrested the unfortunate man as he was about to embark on a large liner bound for New York. The criminal made a desperate resistance, and, eluding the officer's grasp, suddenly drew a sportsman's knife from his pocket, and before he could be prevented gashed his throat across from ear to ear. The occurrence was witnessed by a number of passengers, some of whom fainted, and the deepest gloom prevailed on board the *Vulcan* when she finally steamed away. A large quantity of valuables were discovered in the suicide's portmanteau, including a tiara of diamonds, several rings, watches, and other costly articles."

I passed the paper back in silence. It was dated the 7th inst. The terrible deed was committed on the very day and hour that it was witnessed by Miss Hillyard some hundreds of miles away.

Poor Evelyn! She and her mother left the same day for England, and I have never met them since. The unhappy girl was as utterly unconscious then as she is now of the part she herself played in the miserable drama. In a letter recently received from Mrs. Hillyard she states that her daughter has taken the veil, and the great iron gates of the convent of the Sacred Heart have closed upon her for ever.

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Who Killed Paul Ferrol?

THE doctor paled; decidedly it was something more than mere embarrassment that caused his unwillingness.

"I have given it up, ladies," said he; "I have nothing more to do with magnetism."

"But why, why, doctor?" the pretty pleaders persisted. "Put us to sleep—one of us—you must, or tell us the reason why."

"Well, so be it," said he, at last, still visibly reluctant. "I will tell you why; it may teach you a lesson.

"Eighteen months ago," he began, "I went into the country to see a friend—we will call him Paul Ferrol, if you please. Though old comrades and devoted 'chums,' for a long time the chances of life had separated us, particularly his marriage, which, for certain reasons, had obliged him to live for a while upon one of his properties, situated, as I have said, in the depths of the country. But often and often my thoughts carried me—a trifle enviously, in the midst of my hard work—towards that forgotten corner, where his hours were passed in the quiet routine and bliss of a domestic life.

"Nor was I mistaken in the picture my fancy had drawn; peace, serenity, repose, breathed from the very trees, with their great moss-covered trunks, against which an old mansion leant in the mingled shade and shine of the sunny woods.

"Paul met me at the station. His wife I did not see till later—just before dinner, indeed—a beautiful woman, with dark, brilliant eyes, which flashed, when not shielded by the long curling lashes, with the light of burnished steel. She had a superb figure, and a complexion the tint and texture of old ivory, through which was flowing vigorously the rich red current of a healthy blood. Very, very beautiful she was, but oddly enough, as I looked at her I felt a sense of a deception somewhere under that fair exterior.

"We were not alone; another guest had arrived—a young man and a near neighbour. From the moment of his coming, too—or did I fancy that, also?—Paul seemed less genial.

"Dinner was nearly over when a chance word or question turned the conversation upon a subject no less absorbing then than now, ladies"—and the doctor bowed courteously to the circle of eager listeners closely clustered about him—"turned, I saw, upon the subject of hypnotism and hypnotic suggestion.

"My friend, from the first discoveries, had watched the advance of these studies with the liveliest interest, and many and frequent had been the discussions between himself and his wife concerning them, she denying the phenomena arising from these experiments, and stubbornly pronouncing them humbug and charlatanism; and he affirming that strange things could and did happen, as he knew from his own experience.

"Forced to take sides, I was obliged to admit that I myself was deeply interested in these matters, and had witnessed things that I did not dare to doubt. She was still obstinate, still mocking; she would believe what she saw—no more, no less.

"'If Paul is a subject, as he declares,' said she, 'the thing, too, is easy enough; convince me you have done such things, as you say, by trying it here and now.'

"Paul was willing. I looked intently at him; his eyes wavered curiously away from my gaze; he was a marvellous subject and fell immediately under my will.

"We passed into the drawing-room, placed him in a chair, and I had not made six passes over his brow when he was in a sound hypnotic sleep.

"'Well, he is off,' I said.

"'Impossible! No!'

"She bent over him, called him, punched him—no movement; raised his arm—it fell inert like a log.

"'Quick, quick, suggest something!' said she, a strange eagerness showing suddenly in her face.

"'You would, perhaps, feel the proof stronger, did you make the suggestion yourself.'

"She appeared to think, murmuring half aloud: 'It must be an unaccustomed act, something unusual, that he cannot divine; that does not enter into his habit of life.'

"She looked about her. Near by on a table a magazine lay opened at a recent article on 'Hypnotic Suggestions,' a slender, mother-of-pearl paper-knife thrust between the folds. She turned the leaves hurriedly.

"'Ah-h, we have it at last!' said she, putting her finger upon a certain paragraph; 'an experiment just made—successfully, they say. Repeat it with Paul, and I shall be convinced.'

"The experiment was to suggest to the patient at a fixed hour a predetermined act—the act in this case suicide with some harmless object that the 'subject' should be made to believe a poniard.

"'Willingly,' I responded.

"She handed me the paper-knife. 'This is harmless enough, isn't it?' she said, yielding it to me with a charming smile; 'it wouldn't hurt a fly.'

"'Perfectly harmless,' and I held up the little pearl dagger before Paul's eyes.

"'Do you see it, Paul?' said I, slowly and impressively, 'this poniard here? Well, I am going to put it on that table yonder; to-morrow, when the luncheon bell rings — the luncheon bell, remember—you will come here, take this poniard and—*kill yourself!*'

"Then I roused him. He remembered nothing and felt nothing, only a little uneasiness concerning the act that he was to accomplish, and from which he was determined to defend himself.

"The evening finished gaily with a rubber of whist, ending at ten in order to give the handsome young neighbour—a silent listener to what had been going on—time enough to reach home at a reasonable hour.

"We were walking, Paul, his wife, and I, on the lawn next morning, when the luncheon bell rang. Paul raised his head, listened a second, turned brusquely, and re-entered the house. His wife had become very pale.

"'Come, quick,' said I; 'he has gone for that paper-knife!'

"She remained motionless.

"'To what good?' she said. 'I see already that suggestion has reason in it, *for Paul has gone.* He will come back.'

"I did not wait for her to finish; I hastened to the drawing-room, where my 'subject' had gone.

"I ran; I threw open the door, and Paul was there—*dead*, face downward on the floor—a dagger in his heart!"

"A real dagger, doctor!" cried the mistress of the house, laying her hand softly upon the doctor's arm.

"A real dagger, madam. I turned to the table—the little mother-of-pearl paper knife had gone. Who had taken it? Who had put the other—the real dagger—in its place?

"Heaven alone knows; but she, Paul's wife, and he, the neighbour who dined with us that night, were married ten months ago."

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The process of curing any physical disorder is so generally the converse of "delightful" that the use of this and similar terms in reference to Mr. F. C. Russell's new popular treatment for corpulency naturally attracts special attention. These terms are to be found in a large number of the letters included in the just issued 18th edition of Mr. Russell's little volume of 256 pages, "Corpulency and the Cure" (Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.) These communications are from persons of both sexes, and it is apparent that their number is represented by thousands annually, who have found in this system of treatment a safe, rapid, and permanent cure for excessive fatness. This testimony forms in the aggregate, indeed, a wonderful record of the rapid reduction of excessive adipose tissue, and those who have personal reasons for being interested in the subject should send to the above address 6d. stamps for a copy of Mr. Russell's notably suggestive little book. "I think the treatment most delightful," writes one out of a large number of equally enthusiastic correspondents. And the expressions "Admirable tonic," "Splendid stuff," "A delicious beverage mixed with mineral waters," are of constant recurrence in this singularly interesting correspondence. The details given by many of the writers of these letters as to the results of the treatment fully justify the use of such eulogistic phrases. It must certainly be delightful to experience the sensation of losing unnecessary and dangerous fat by pounds per week, and frequently stones per month, and that by the aid of treatment which simultaneously increases the appetite and renders its reasonable indulgence innocuous. The experience, too, must be rendered still more delightful by the knowledge, which may be gained from a perusal of Mr. Russell's book, that his preparation is a pure vegetable product, without any admixture of the mineral poisons which are too frequently administered. With a candour which also is delightful, Mr. Russell prints in his book the recipe for the preparation.

SUMMER HEAT AND OBESITY.

Summer heat, with the out-door enjoyments which come in its train, is a source of unmixed delight to all whose physical condition is sound. The full feast of pleasure to which hospitable Nature at this season invites mankind, is not, however, for those whose infirmities forbid them to undergo, without serious discomfort, a considerable amount of bodily fatigue. To those in particular who are the victims of excessive corpulence, the arrival of the genial summer warmth serves chiefly as a painful reminder that, for them, the delights of long woodland rambles, the climbing of mountain tops, and all the adventurous ways of flood and field are prohibited joys. The palpitating heart, the reeling brain, and the possible deadly sunstroke, which are the concomitants of obesity, banish all the pleasant anticipations which once came with the advent of the glad summer-tide. How much of this deprivation of enjoyment and positive misery is absolutely and easily avoidable, may be learned by consulting Mr. F. Cecil Russell's "Corpulency and the Cure" (256 pages), a little work whose popularity is proved by the fact that its 18th edition has just been issued. This fact, too, indicates, in some degree, the wide area now covered by Mr. Russell's wonderful success as an expert in the reduction of excessive fat. His process, which is absolutely safe and pleasant, is so rapid in its operation that any over-corpulent lady or gentleman can easily get rid of all unnecessary weight in a very few weeks, so as to be able, before the autumn is with us, to enjoy the delightful feeling (and the appearance too) of renewed youth and energy. Mr. Russell makes no mystery of the nature of his curative preparation—apparently miraculous as are its effects in simultaneously reducing weight and increasing appetite—the consequently larger amount of food being consumed with impunity. He prints, therefore, his recipe in his singularly suggestive book, which may be obtained from Booksellers, or by sending 6d. stamps to his offices, Woburn House, 27, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.

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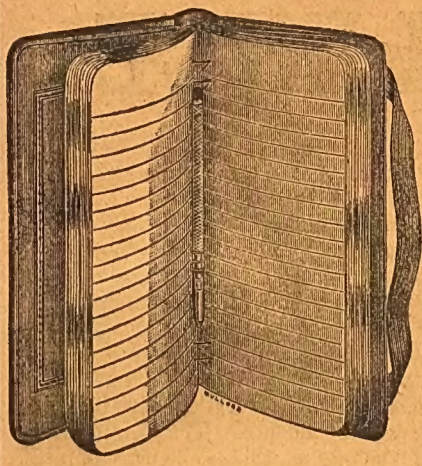

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